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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4369
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6943
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN 0142
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 4291
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8180
RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5424
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0071
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2654
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2817
RUEHM/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3540
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4733
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 001991

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TAGS: [EMIN](#) [EINV](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: POLICE CONFRONT MINERS, GOB ACCUSES INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES

REF: A. LA PAZ 1976

[¶](#)B. LA PAZ 1403
[¶](#)C. 06 LA PAZ 2557

Classified By: Ambassador Philip Goldberg for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

Summary

[¶](#)1. (C) The police are continuing to confront cooperative (i.e. independent) miners in El Alto and La Paz with tear gas, and the leaders of the cooperatives are now speaking of "arming" themselves in an ongoing struggle. The national federation of cooperative miners (FENCOMIN) has stated that they will initiate stronger pressure tactics and will not speak with the government until the wounded miners are compensated, the 10 detained miners are released, and all confiscated items (dynamite included) are returned (ref A). The police, meanwhile, are displaying the hundreds of sticks of dynamite (roughly 60 pounds so far) that they have confiscated from the "peaceful" protesters.

Inflammatory Rhetoric from GOB and Miners

[¶](#)2. (C) Cooperative leaders have publicly expressed outrage that their "peaceful" (dynamite-carrying) protest was met with such force on the part of the GOB. "We will arm to defend ourselves, as Vice President Garcia Linera said in Achacachi (a reference to Garcia Linera's call to arms in a speech to the red ponchos in 2006, ref C)" a mining leader stated, adding "we used to be in alliance with Evo Morales." For his part, Vice President Garcia Linera declared that "the state-salaried miners had historically fought to maintain

democracy and to recover the natural resources, but the cooperatives are very different and defend their local interests." Thus Garcia Linera seems to be publicly supporting the salaried miners who, less than a week ago, shut down much of the country and tried to bring explosives into La Paz. As discussed before (ref B,) FENCOMIN leadership has been concerned for a while that the MAS party has turned against them. (Comment: Garcia Linera's statement may be designed to increase traditional friction between the salaried and cooperative miners and, as FENCOMIN president Andres Villca alleged to Emboffs May 18th, the GOB may in fact be trying to do away with or at least weaken the cooperatives. End comment.)

GOB Accuses International Mining Companies

¶3. (C) GOB ministers have also publicly accused the "large mining companies" (i.e. international companies such as the three U.S. companies, Apex's San Cristobal, Coeur D'Alene's San Bartolome and Newmont's Inti Raymi) of fomenting the current cooperative protest. The Vice Minister of Government said in a television interview that the cooperatives were acting at the behest of large mining companies who do not agree with the mining policies of the GOB. (Comment: The cooperatives have a long history of disagreement with this government's mining policies, and have in fact won victories, particularly on tax and concession issues.) The head of the Mining Association, Humberto Rada, immediately issued a statement clarifying that although the mining association members have concerns about the changes to the mining code and tax regime, they are not in any way backing the violent protests in La Paz. (Comment: San Bartolome president Jim

Duff informed Emboff on July 18 that in fact the actions of the cooperatives are directly damaging his company: construction at the site has been shut down for two days due to blockades between the site and the city of Potosi. Calls to other industry contacts reveal that so far operations at San Cristobal and Inti Raymi have not been affected.)

What Lies Ahead?

¶4. (C) In terms of the immediate situation, the question now is whether the miners will still be present in La Paz and El Alto during the large community demonstration or "cabildo" scheduled for the 20th. Although the gathering is expected to be peaceful, the presence of the miners could complicate the situation. In the longer term, the cooperatives' original stated goal of "taking" Sucre may be delayed (or dropped) as they focus their attentions and their actions in La Paz.

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